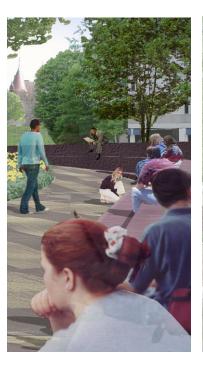
# POST OFFICE **SQUARE**

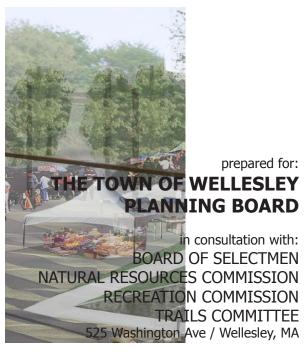
framework plan











prepared by:

## **StoSS** landscape urbanism

51 Melcher St #601 / Boston , MA

with:

## Rizzo Associates

traffic engineering + planning Framingham , MA

october 2003





## **OVERVIEW**

This Framework Plan for the proposed renovation of Post Office Square is an extension of the Town of Wellesley's Comprehensive Plan and the Wellesley Square Forum, which recommended pedestrian, open space, and urban design improvements to this important historic civic space in the center of town.

The proposed plan establishes clearly defined pedestrian plazas, groves, and amenities within a landscape space linked to the adjacent Hunnewell Park. It greatly enhances pedestrian safety while reconfiguring and improving automobile access, parking, and drop-off areas. The plan also improves access to and from the commuter rail station and throughout the Square.

As envisioned, the framework plan establishes a new and improved identity for the Town's most active square. It creates a multi-use, multi-programmable civic plaza that is integrated with adjacent historic open spaces and enhances access to the post office and the Wellesley Square commuter rail station. It celebrates the town's history by marking the

location of the underground Cochituate Aqueduct with an interactive fountain, and it accommodates new uses and events in the multi-use plaza, which also functions as a parking grove. The proposed renovations for Post Office Square greatly enhance the image of Wellesley Square, improve pedestrian safety and automobile access, and create a more vital and active open space in the heart of Wellesley.

The Post Office Square Framework Plan has been developed for and by the Planning Board of the Town of Wellesley, in close consultation with the Board of Selectmen, the Natural Resources Commission, the Recreation Commission, and the Trails Committee. Two public workshops were held for participation, review, and comment by local residents and business people. (A full list of public workshop participants may be found in the appendix to this report.) During the development of the plan, the project team consulted with the Department of Public Works, the Municipal Light Plant, the Design Review Board, the Town's traffic consultants (Beta Engineers), and the Wellesley Square Zoning Study consultants (McGregor & Associates).













IS UNSAFE FOR
PEDESTRIANS AND
PROJECTS A POOR
IMAGE AS TOWN
CENTER AND GATEWAY.



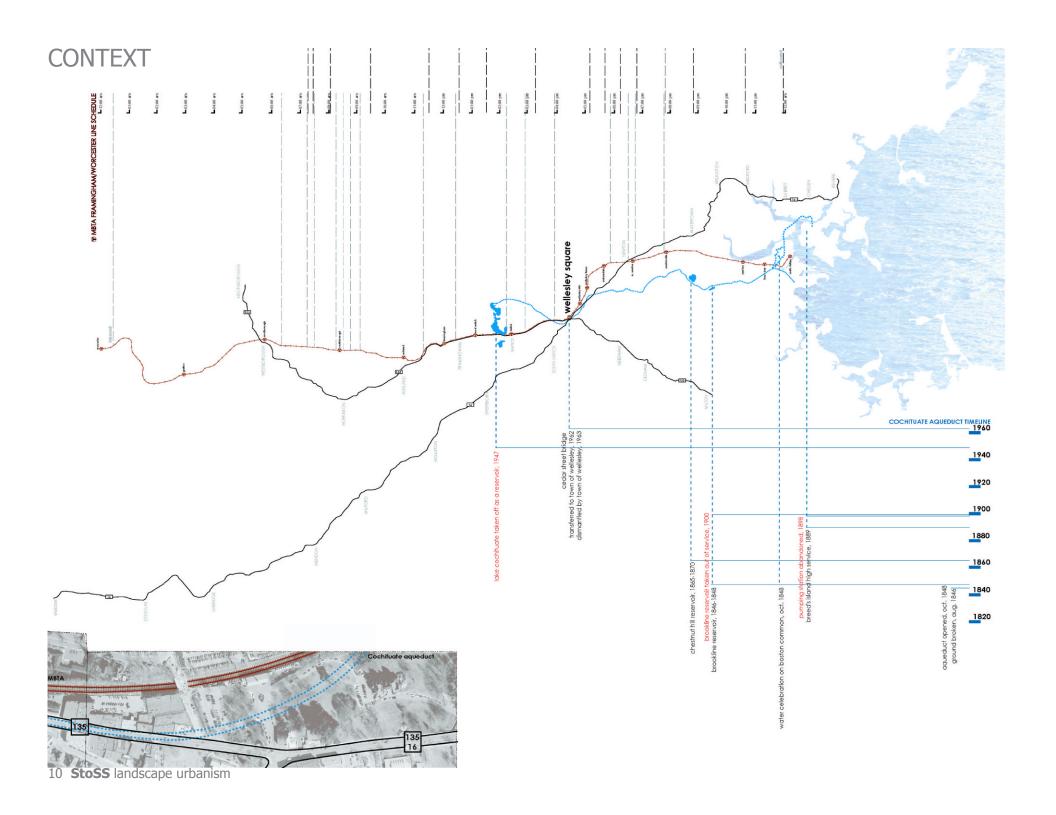








THE PROPOSED SQUARE
GREATLY ENHANCES
FUNCTIONALITY,
SAFETY AND,
CIVIC IDENTITY.
IT EXPANDS THE RANGE











**POST OFFICE SQUARE OCCUPIES** THE NEXUS OF 3 REGIONAL INFRA-STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS: REGIONAL **ROAD** SYSTEM, COMMUTER + FREIGHT RAILROAD, AND THE COCHITUATE AQUEDUCT, A NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTY. IT REMAINS A HUB OF ACTIVITY PUNCTUATED BY DAILY, SEA-**SONAL, AND ANNUAL FLOWS** OF TRAINS, PEOPLE, VEHICLES, AND (POTENTIALLY) WATER.

## **CONTEXT**

Post Office Square is part of an **open space system** that extends from the police station in the east, through Hunnewell Park and Town Hall Park, to the Post Office and Wellesley Square Station. It is close to Simon's Park, the Village Church Burial Grounds, and Wellesley College.













The character of the open spaces changes dramatically: from quiet, passive spaces in east, with duck pond; to civic and historic park at Town Hall; to active town center serving multiple purposes at Post Office Square. This plan reinforces these tendencies by enhancing **outdoor activities** and **events** in and around Post Office Square.

## **OVERVIEW**

The reconfigured Square is a multi-use civic space, carefully knitted into its historic context while equipped to accommodate a wide range of contemporary uses. It is defined by a continuous carpet of vivid paving that extends from Central Street to the MBTA tracks, and from the embankment along Crest Road across Grove Street. This new plaza is overlaid with a grove of young shade trees, which re-establishes a continuous landscape canopy across the Square and into Hunnewell Park.

Pedestrian spaces are carved out of the They include a gathering plaza-grove. space with interactive fountain atop the underground aqueduct; lawn areas around the exposed ledge and historic Station Tree; and seatwalls and an accessible ramp incised into the slope along Crest Road. The post office would be renovated and would extend along the north edge of the Square as a clearly defined and sheltered railroad platform, complete with a new cafe, media panels, phones, drinking fountains, seating, Parking areas and roadways are etc. carefully integrated into the plaza and can be selectively closed for temporary events.

The proposed design expands potential activities, improves safety and accessibility, and establishes a more coherent and elegant civic space.







credits: Alex MacLean (above); Bob Sechrest (below)



THE HEART OF THE NEW POST OFFICE SQUARE WILL BE RECON-FIGURED AS A MULTI-USE PUBLIC PLAZA AND GREEN. IT WILL THUS ACCOMMODATE VARIOUS FESTIVALS AND COMMUNITY ACTIV-ITIES RANGING IN SIZE FROM A SMALL FARMER/VENDOR AREA TO LARGE, COMMUNITY-WIDE FESTIVALS.

THE PLAZA SURFACE, COVERING BOTH ROADWAY AND PEDESTRIAN PLAZAS, WILL ENCOMPASS AND INTEGRATE EXISTING VEGETATION AND FEATURES, SUCH AS THE STATION TREE AND EXPOSED LEDGE, TO MAINTAIN THE SQUARE'S RICH HERITAGE. THE PLAZA WILL BE PLANTED WITH A CONTINUOUS GROVE OF TREES.





credits: Samuel Worcester Rowse after Benjamin F. Smith, View of the Water Celebration, on Boston Common, October 25, 1848 (above); Hargreaves Associates (below)



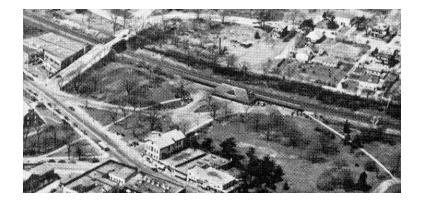
AN INTERACTIVE CIVIC FOUNTAIN WILL MARK THE LOCATION OF THE UNDERGROUND COCHITUATE AQUEDUCT, CELEBRATING ITS IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN AND THE REGION. OPENED IN 1848, THE AQUEDUCT BROUGHT WATER FROM LAKE COCHITUATE TO BOSTON COMMON; IT WAS LATER EXTENDED TO SOUTH AND EAST BOSTON. THE OPENING OF THE AQUEDUCT WAS MARKED BY A LARGE 'WATER CELEBRATION', AN IMPORTANT CIVIC EVENT ON BOSTON COMMON ATTENDED BY OVER 100,000 PEOPLE.

THE FOUNTAIN IS THE CENTERPIECE OF THE SQUARE'S NEW PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN SPACE, WHICH ALSO INCLUDES PUBLIC GARDENS, SHADED **SEATING**, AND A NEW **ENTRY** AT GROVE STREET. TOGETHER, THESE ELEMENTS CREATE A **NEW IDENTITY** FOR THE SQUARE.





credits: Wellesley Historical Society (above); Five Pounds Currency, Three Pounds Corn (below)



THE CURRENT POST OFFICE AND THE WELLESLEY SQUARE RAIL STA-TION WILL BE RENOVATED AND EXPANDED ALONG THE ENTIRE NORTH EDGE OF THE SQUARE, CREATING A FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE POINT FOR THE TOWN. IN THIS WAY, IT WILL RECAPTURE THE ELEGANCE OF RAIL TRAVEL AND THE INTE-**GRATION OF ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS** LOST WHEN THE ORIGINAL STATION (LEFT) WAS DEMOLISHED.

THE POST OFFICE WILL BE RE-CLAD AND EXTENDED TO INCLUDE AN INDOOR / OUTDOOR CAFE. NEW SHADE STRUCTURES WILL DEFINE THE RECONFIGURED RAILROAD PLATFORM, WHICH WILL BE OUTFIT-TED WITH NEW SIGNAGE, POSTING BOARDS, AND SEATING.



THE NEW SQUARE CREATES AN ACTIVE PEDES-TRIAN ENVIRONMENT IN A CONTINUOUS LAND-**SCAPE** THAT EXTENDS INTO HUNNEWELL PARK.

THE NEW SQUARE ACCOMMODATES BOTH EXIST-**ING AND EXPANDED USES**, EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL EVENTS, WHILE STILL FUNCTIONING AS A VIBRANT **TOWN CENTER**.

THE NEW SQUARE IMPROVES PEDESTRIAN AND AUTO SAFETY, ENHANCES FUNCTIONALITY, AND ESTABLISHES A STRONG CIVIC IDENTITY FOR THIS RENEWED AND RE-ACTIVATED OPEN SPACE.



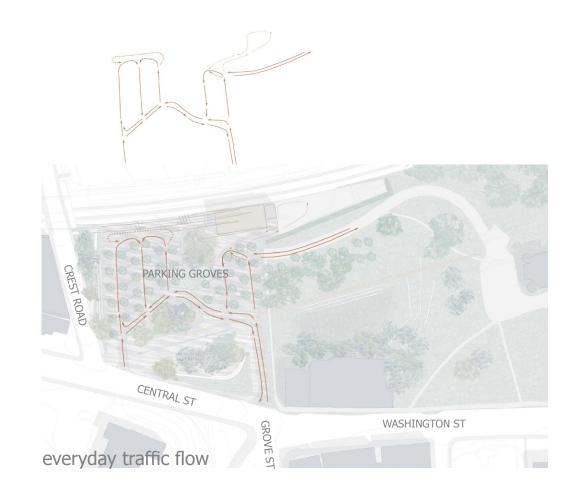


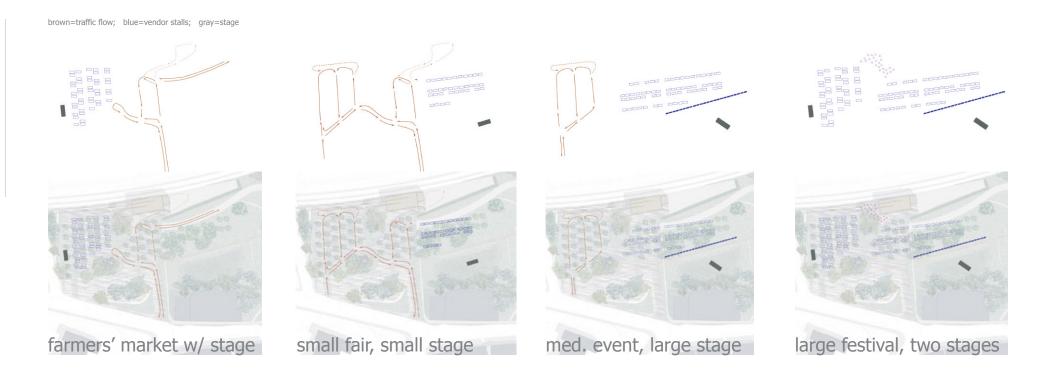






THE NEW SQUARE SIMPLIFIES AND CLARIFIES AUTOMOBILE CIRCULATION AND PARKING. PARKING IS SITUATED ON THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE SITE, UNDER A CANOPY OF TREES, ATOP THE EXTENDED PLAZA PAVING. RAILROAD AVENUE IS PERMANENTLY CLOSED, AND TRAFFIC IS RE-ROUTED BETWEEN GROVE STREET AND THE NEW WEST ENTRY TO THE SITE, IN ORDER TO CONNECT EAST AND WEST PARKING GROVES, THE ROAD TO TOWN HALL, AND ACCESS TO THE POST OFFICE. THE AUTO ENTRIES TO THE SITE, WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE PARKING AREAS, CAN BE CLOSED INDEPENDENTLY OR SIMULTANE-**OUSLY**, ALLOWING FOR THE STAGING OF SMALL TO LARGE MARKETS AND FESTIVALS. IN THIS WAY, THE SQUARE CAN FLEXIBLY ACCOMMODATE BOTH EVERYDAY BUSINESS AND SPECIAL EVENTS.





## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **LOGISTICS. LAND OWNERSHIP**

CURRENTLY THE POST OFFICE OCCUPIES LAND OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY A PRIVATE TRUST, WHILE THE MBTA HAS JURISDICTION OVER THE COMMUTER RAIL STATION AND TRACKS. ALL OTHER LANDS IN THE SQUARE ARE OWNED BY THE TOWN.

RENOVATIONS TO THE POST OFFICE AND COM-MUTER RAIL STATION WILL REQUIRE A HIGHER DEGREE OF COORDINATION BETWEEN AND AMONG THE TOWN, THE LAND OWNERS, AND THE MBTA. THIS MAY RESULT IN A SIGNIFICANTLY EXTENDED TIMEFRAME FOR THIS PORTION OF PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION.

## PHASING . STAGED IMPLEMENTATION

THE PROPOSED SQUARE MAY BE IMPLEMENTED EITHER AS A WHOLE OR IN STAGES, ACCORDING TO FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND THE STATUS OF NEGO-TIATIONS WITH POTENTIAL PARTNERS. THE PLAN AT RIGHT IDENTIFIES MAJOR AREAS AND ELEMENTS THAT COULD PROCEED INDEPENDENTLY. THE FOL-LOWING AREAS AND ELEMENTS SHOULD BE CON-STRUCTED FIRST, BUT COULD BE PHASED IN THE ORDER LISTED:

- -CENTRAL PARK
- -PARKING GROVES
- -WATER FEATURE
- -CREST SLOPE
- -GROVE EXTENSION

THE REMAINING AREAS COULD BE CONSTRUCTED LATER, IN ANY SEQUENCE:

- -POST OFFICE / RAIL STATION RENOVATION
- -INTERPRETATIVE PATH
- -SEATING IN THE BOWL + ON NEARBY SLOPE



## **IMPLEMENTATION**

## **POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES**

Community Preservation Act / Town of Wellesley

Land and Water Conservation Act / National Park Service

- state-side grants for open space expansion, renovation, improved accessibility
- http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/fed\_state.html

Urban and Community Forestry Grants / Massachusetts Bureau of Forestry

- forestry enhancement projects, planning and implementation
- http://www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/forestry/urban/

Trust for Public Land

- public space grants and technical assistance
- http://www.tpl.org/

## **Partners**

- **MBTA**
- **USPS**
- owners / trust of post office property

## Other Sources

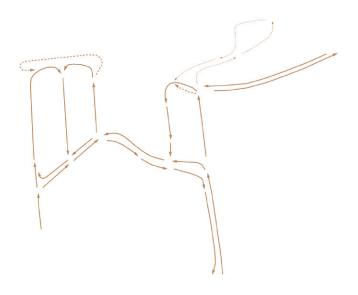
- café lease / licensing
- licensing fees for market and festival vendors
- private donations / fundraising

# APPENDIX

# POST OFFICE SQUARE PROGRAMMING: EVENTS . ACTIVITIES . USES

uses / activities	frequency	active period	current space used	possible space used
CURRENT / CONTINUOUS Garden Club plantings	seasonally	spring-fall	Central Park	feature garden space(s)
parking	continuous	year-round	parking lot, streets	multi-use parking plaza groves
mailbox for auto drop	continuous	year-round	traffic island	TBD
post office parking and service	continuous	year-round	customers south of building	integrate with parking plaza grove consolidate, expand to east temporary kiss and ride area
train drop-off/pickup ("Kiss and Ride")	twice daily	year-round	service, employees east and west parking lot	
rock climbing / kids play	sporadic	spring-fall	exposed ledge	exposed ledge and expanded plaza area
pedestrian access to/from train	twice daily high, sporadic	year-round	sidewalks / bridge along Crest paths, roads through to Washington	pedestrian passage / bridge to tailby redesigned path system
Summer Concert Series	weekly (seasonally)	June-August	the bowl, including slope to town hall flatbed brought in for stage vendors along Grove Street	the bowl, possibly with enhanced seating multi-use/directional stage expanded festival / plaza space adjacent
informal seating	sporadic	year-round, esp in summer	some in Central Park	expand all over site
trails	sporadic, but more with trains	year-round, esp in summer	more to east of site	clearer access to crest and rr station
community bulletin board	continuous	year-round	along Grove Street	more central location with other activities, spaces
phones	sporadic	year-round	near post office parking, train platform	more protected area at edge of station possibly near central street
CURRENT / OCCASIONAL Picnic in Park	once annually	late June	bowl for concerts grass, Grove St: vendors, tables hay rides up through Town Hall Park picnics areas in grass	the bowl, possibly with enhanced seating second stage to west of site expanded festival / plaza space adjacent same plus more
July Jubilation (merchant sale)	once annually	mid-July	Central Street blocked off fire equipment, hay rides	could extend sale / festival space to plaza extend to po square, town hall park
Holiday festival	once annually	late Nov / early Dec	Central Street blocked off fire equipment, hay rides	could extend sale / festival space to plaza extend to po square, town hall park
Wonderful Wellesley Weekend	once annually	mid-May	Washington Street parade grandstand at church parade ends at PO Square activities at Hunnewell Field military encampmenttown hall lawn	same expand viewing areasouth edge square bus storage, waiting at Tailby? festival space / vendors in plaza same
Boston Marathon	once annually	mid-April	edge of Central Street couple of vendors on Grove St town hall lawn	expand viewing area north into square expand festival plaza space same
Garden Club plant sale	once (?) annually	spring?	Central Park	feature garden space(s), festival space
POTENTIAL NEW USES water play / fountain	n/a	potentially spring-fall, winter ice	none	in expanded plaza, poss along aqueduct
aqueduct interpretative elements	n/a	pot. year-round	none	along enhanced line of aqueduct
cafe	n/a	pot. year-round	none	new cafe space, edge of active zone
farmer's market	seasonal	spring-fall	transient; no permanent place in town	portion of expanded plaza area

## TRAFFIC + PARKING



PARKING IS CONCENTRATED IN THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE SQUARE, AWAY FROM CENTRAL STREET AND NEW PEDESTRIAN AREAS, YET CLOSE TO THE RAILROAD STATION AND POST OFFICE. THE PRO-POSED PLAN RECONFIGURES AUTO CIRCULATION DRAMATICALLY, FIRST BY CLOSING DOWN RAILROAD AVENUE ENTIRELY. A NEW ONE-WAY ENTRANCE NEAR THE WEST END OF THE SQUARE WOULD ALLOW ACCESS TO THE WEST PARKING GROVE FROM CENTRAL STREET (THIS ENTRY COULD BE USED AS FOR TWO-WAY ACCESS WHEN THE EAST PARKING ZONE IS CLOSED FOR FESTIVALS). GROVE STREET WOULD REMAIN A TWO-WAY ROAD BUT WOULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY NARROWED TO ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY. ACCESS TO THE SQUARE FROM THE WEST COULD ALSO BE IMPROVED WITH THE ADDITION OF A NEW LEFT TURN PHASE (6 SECOND MAX) FROM CENTRAL STREET ONTO GROVE STREET AT THE EXISTING SIGNALIZED INTERSECTION. THE NEW CIR-CULATION AND PARKING PATTERNS MAINTAIN CLEAR ACCESS TO AND FROM THE TOWN HALL ROAD AND THE POST OFFICE SERVICE ZONE. IN ADDITION, A NEW "KISS AND RIDE" DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP AREA CAN BE ACCOMMODATED NEXT TO THE RAIL ROAD STATION. OVERALL PARKING COUNTS REMAIN AT 100-105 SPACES.



## CONCEPTUAL STUDY OPTIONS



# MAX LANDSCAPE

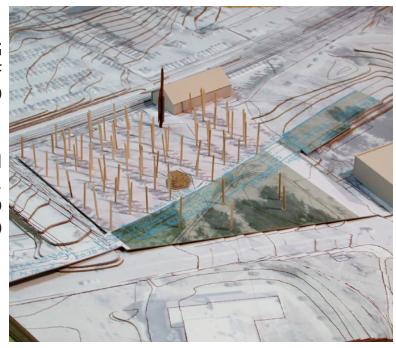
THIS FIRST STUDY OPTION EXAMINED THE POSSIBILITY OF RE-CREATING HISTORIC CIRCULATION AND LANDSCAPE PATTERNS.

WHILE THE CONTINUITY OF LANDSCAPE ACROSS THE SQUARE FROM HUNNEWELL PARK WAS THOUGHT TO BE A GREAT ENHANCEMENT, THE SCHEME LIMITS ACCESS TO THE POST OFFICE AND RAIL STATION, AND FORCES ALL PARKING TO BE DISPLACED TO A NEW DECK AT THE TAILBY LOT.

# PARKING GROVE

THIS SECOND STUDY OPTION PROPOSED A CONTINUOUS PARKING GROVE (CARS PARKED AMONG TREES) ON THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE SITE, WITH THE SOUTHERN HALF DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO PEDESTRIAN AND LANDSCAPE FUNCTIONS.

WHILE THE GENERAL SITE PARTI AND THE USE OF TREES IN CONJUNCTION WITH PARKING WERE CONSIDERED ADVANTAGEOUS, THE SCHEME REQUIRES ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH REGARD TO ACCESS FROM CENTRAL AND GROVE STREETS, AND ACCESS TO THE POST OFFICE SERVICE AREA AND THE TRAIN PLATFORM.

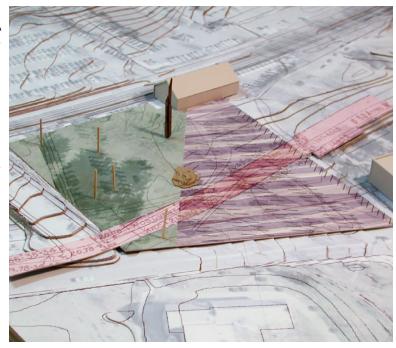


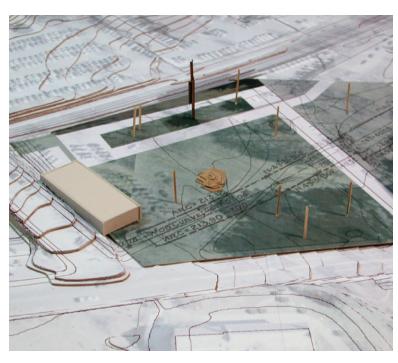
## CONCEPTUAL STUDY OPTIONS

# PARKING PLAZA

THIS THIRD STUDY OPTION PROPOSES A SIGNIFICANT REORGANIZATION OF THE SITE, WITH A MAJOR PARKING PLAZA ON THE EAST HALF OF THE SITE, BETWEEN THE POST OFFICE AND CENTRAL STREET, AND A LARGE, CONTIGUOUS GREEN SPACE ON THE WEST HALF OF THE SITE. THE PLAZA COULD BE MULTI-FUNCTIONAL, HOSTING LARGE FESTIVALS WHEN NOT IN USE FOR PARKING.

WHILE THE MULTI-USE PLAZA WOULD SUCCESSFULLY REINFORCE AND BROADEN THE TEMPORARY EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE SQUARE, THE SITE ORGANIZATION STRATEGY SEEMED TO ISOLATE THE WESTERN GREEN SPACE AND CHANGE THE CHARACTER OF THE EDGE ALONG CENTRAL STREET TOO DRAMATICALLY.

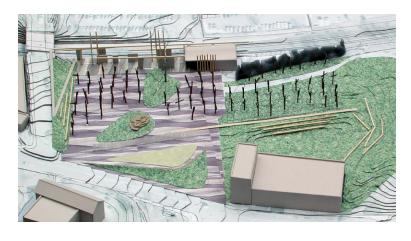


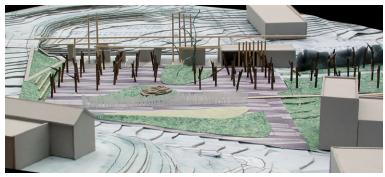


# TOWN COMMON

THIS FOURTH STUDY OPTION WOULD RELOCATE THE POST OFFICE TO THE EASTERN EDGE OF THE SITE, WHERE IT COULD HAVE A STREET PRESENCE ALONG BOTH CENTRAL AND CREST, WHILE OPENING UP THE INTERIOR OF THE SITE TO FORM A MORE COHERENT TOWN COMMON. THE NORTH EDGE WOULD BE RECONFIGURED WITH A MORE GENEROUS AUTO TURN-AROUND AND PARKING ZONE NEAR THE TRAIN PLATFORM.

WHILE MOST ASPECTS OF THE SCHEME COULD CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO THE SQUARE'S URBAN DESIGN, USE, AND CHARACTER, THE SCHEME'S DEPENDENCE ON THE POST OFFICE RELOCATION WOULD ENTAIL LOGISTICAL, LAND OWNERSHIP, AND FISCAL ISSUES THAT COULD SUBSTANTIALLY DELAY THE PROJECT.







THE RECOMMENDED SCHEME BORROWS STRATEGIES FROM EACH OF THE STUDY OPTIONS. THE CONTINUOUS GROVE AT THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE SITE RE-ESTABLISHES HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CONTINUITY WITH HUNNEWELL PARK. THE PARKING GROVE AND PARKING PLAZA CONCEPTS ARE COMBINED TO CREATE A CONTINUOUS MULTI-USE, SHADED PLAZA. THE NORTH-SOUTH SITE STRATEGY ESTABLISHES A SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED AND IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN SPACE ALONG CENTRAL STREET, WHILE CONCENTRATING PARKING NEAR THE POST OFFICE AND TRAIN PLATFORM. FINALLY, THE INTEGRATED POST OFFICE / CAFE / TRAIN STATION STRUCTURE AND DROP-OFF AREA EXPAND AND CLARIFY THE SET OF ACTIVITIES ALONG THE NORTHERN EDGE OF THE SQUARE, ENHANCING FUNCTIONALITY, USE, AND IMAGE.



FINAL MODEL IS AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING IN THE PLANNING BOARD OFFICE, TOWN HALL.

## **RESOURCES**

Town of Wellesley Comprehensive Plan, 1994.

Town of Wellesley Zoning Bylaw.

Town of Wellesley Design Guidelines.

Wellesley Square: A Vision. Van Orman and Associates. September 20, 1996.

Report of the Wellesley Square Forum. Van Orman and Associates. June 12, 1997.

Wellesley Square Action Plan. Larry Koff and Associates. December 18, 1998.

Recommendations for Organizing a Wellesley Square Partnership. Community Investment Association with Van Orman and Associates. July 2000.

Plans for the Reconstruction of Central Street and Washington Street, Beta Engineering Inc.

Historic Photographs and Maps are taken from:

The Wellesley Historical Society Collections.

Town Of Wellesley Planning Department Collections.

The Wellesley Post Card Album. Wellesley, MA: The Wellesley Historical Society, 1999.

Elizabeth M. Hinchcliffe. Five Pounds Currency, Three Pounds Corn: Wellesley's Centennial Story. Town of Wellesley, MA: 1981.

## **WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**

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James Meade, Planning Board Janet Bowser, Natural Resource Commission Director Jean Todd Jim Conlin, Community Preservation Committee Joan Gaughan, Natural Resource Commission Joe Grignaffini Julia O'Brian, Newton Planning Department Julius Levine **Katherine Stover** Kit Bowry, Community Preservation Committee Marjorie Arcand, Historical Commission Maureen Febiger, Natural Resource Commission Meghan Conlon, Town Planner Pam Stewart Peter DeNatale, Natural Resource Commission Raymond DiLucci **Richard Carls** Rick Brown, Planning Director Robert Dischino Rose Mary Donahue, Planning Board Sheila Dinsmoor, Design Review Board Sheila Tucker Steve Fader, Town Engineer Sue Wright, Planning Board Tom Frisardi, Planning Board